

Call for All Theater Groups
August 10–15, 2026



مسابقة إثراء للمسرحيات القصيرة

Ithra Short Play Contest

Participation Guide

Ithra Short Plays Contest 2026



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Vision for the Ithra Short Play Contest:



The original vision of the Ithra Short Play Contest is to be a premier regional theater contest that nurtures creative talent, amplifies diverse voices and enriches the Saudi theatrical landscape through interdisciplinary collaboration, dynamic programming and inclusive participation—while preserving the original spirit of the Short Play Contest as a catalyst for artistic innovation and cultural exchange. Building on the success of the Short Play Contest, we are evolving the initiative into a theater contest featuring multiple tracks. This expansion will broaden participation, foster interdisciplinary collaboration and enhance audience engagement, while preserving the contest’s original vision. By integrating workshops, showcases and new competitive categories, the contest will continue to empower emerging artists and promote cultural exchange, transforming the contest into a regional hub for theatrical

Objective:

- To provide a platform for emerging and professional theater artists to showcase their work, receive mentorship and contribute to the enrichment of Saudi Arabia’s theatrical landscape.
- To support and develop the craft of acting, directing and design for regional artists in the theater field.
- To provide a launch pad for emerging arts to transition into full-time professional careers.
- To build a passionate, engaged and skilled theater community in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia.
- Support in the creation of original and high-quality theatrical productions.
- Increase visibility and awareness for Saudi and regional theater artists.



Contest History

The Ithra Short Play Contest is a contest presenting new original theater scripts since 2021. The contest provided audiences with engaging works that challenge and entertain. As a part of Ithra’s mission, we aim to build a theater community in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia which produces high quality drama on the international level.

Since its inaugural season, the contest has had a huge impact on the Saudi theater scene through developing new and original work with emerging and established theater makers providing a platform for many participants to launch full-time professional careers.



The Contest Tracks



A.Competition Track(12 Weeks Program)

The Competition Track highlights emerging Saudi talent in the performing arts, providing a professional showcase environment for amateur to semi-professional directors and actors. Focused on participants' experience level, the track promotes original storytelling and stagecraft while preparing young artists for industry-level experiences. During the 2026 contest, the track will feature five original short productions, with one competition work staged per day to ensure a high-quality, focused contest experience for both audiences and participants.

Participant Profile and Eligibility

Target Group:

Emerging artists (amateur to semi-professional) in directing or acting.

Experience:

Directors eligible to participate should not exceed directing two plays in the past.

Production Team:

Production team size must not have more than 15 participants in the roles listed below:

Team Composition must be finalized eight weeks before the beginning of the contest				
Director	Stage Manager	Makeup Artists	1 to 6 representatives	Assistant Stage Manager

- At least one director and six actors.
- Multi-role participation is not allowed within the same team for directors. The role of the director only focuses on directing. Other team members such as actors are allowed to perform more than one character in the play.

Theater Group Cast and Production Team Details



Director

Oversees artistic vision

Assistant Director

Supports the director by taking notes during rehearsals, coordinating with cast and crew, giving feedback to actors and sometimes leading rehearsals

Set Designer

Designs the physical environment of the play.

Lighting Designer

Designs lighting to enhance mood and visibility.

Sound Designer

Creates and controls sound effects and music.

Stage Manager

Coordinates rehearsal and performance logistics

Production Manager

Oversees the entire production process, coordinating between departments (set, costumes, lights, sound, etc.) to ensure the show stays on schedule, within budget and meets technical requirements. Acts as the central point of communication between the artistic and technical teams.

Costume Designer

Designs and oversees costumes for the cast.

Props Master

Responsible for organizing and managing all props used in the production.

Actors/Actresses

Maximum six performing on stage.

Work Requirements:

- An existing one act play that is written by an external playwright, the play should be professionally published and grant authorization from the play writer (not from the team). It should be subject to specific criteria in writing plays with a performance duration of **30 – 40 minutes**.
- Must be not previously professionally produced. This production should be presented for the first time.

Criteria of selected plays:

- The play should be impactful storytelling that takes audience into a journey

Cultural Suitability Requirements:

Aspects:

What to Check/Include:

- **Respect for Islamic and Social Values:** Avoid any content that is offensive, mocking or disrespectful to Islam, its teachings, religious figures or practices. Scenes relating to religion should be handled sensitively.
- **Script Review and Approval:** Scripts are often reviewed in advance by regulatory bodies. You may need to obtain approval from bodies such as the Theater and Performing Arts Authority or the General Authority for Media Regulation.
- **Licenses and Permits:** Appropriate licenses must be obtained for the performance and content. Permits from local authorities may require the submission of the script, cast list and synopsis.
- **Age Rating:** Some content may require age rating or restrictions (e.g., limiting the presence of children).
- **Use of Arabic**
- **Coordination with Prayer Times and Religious Holidays:** Rehearsals and performances must respect prayer times.

Technical Requirements & Restrictions:

- Ithra Theater will create a standard lighting, sound and staging that all contestants must use as part of their performance. Additional lighting and sound requests can be considered in discussion with the Producer and Production Manager to make sure it keeps the contest fair. Contestants should provide Ithra's Producer and Production Manager a written list of technical elements that they would like to use for approval.
- There is to be no projection or addition of video elements in each work.
- Ithra will provide a Stage Manager to oversee the stage as well as link between Front of House and contest Stage Manager.
- Ithra will provide a Lighting and Sound Operator to operate the equipment. The contests team will not operate this equipment and must use their allocated time wisely to program and rehearse their performance.
- It is the contestants responsibility to provide a breakdown schedule of how they plan on using their rehearsal times, a cue list for each technical department (Staging, Flys, Audio and Lighting) ahead of the first scheduled technical rehearsal in theater.

Production Requirements & Restrictions:

- Using real or fake food, confetti powder, feather or water is not allowed in any performance.
- The last acceptable changes or edits to scripts or participants information should be done 6 weeks prior to the start of the contest.
- All scenic, props, costume and make-up elements need to be approved in writing by the Production Manager and Producer prior to purchase or manufacturing. Items that are not approved and used in the Dress Rehearsal or Performance could lead to disqualification of any awards presented in the closing ceremony.



Ithra Short Play Contest 2026 Plan



Competition Entries

5 productions

1 per contest day, excluding the final day



Duration

6 Days Contest



Duration

30 – 40 minutes per production



Evaluation

Professional jury with audience voting

Awards



Audience Choice Award



Best Actress



Best Actor



Best Play



Best Scenography



Best Script



Best Direction

Selection & Process



The Competition Track follows a multi-phase process designed to identify, mentor and showcase emerging talent in the performing arts.

Phase One: Registration and Participation

Teams submit scripts and participant details via the official online portal.

Required materials include:

- Original short play script (30 – 40 minutes / ~20 pages)
- Synopsis (plot, themes and artistic focus)
- Director's Vision / Artistic Proposal
- Cast and crew bios (roles and relevant experience)
- Initial Production Design Proposal (set, costumes, lighting, sound)
- Theater group / applicant background information

Eligibility:

- Participant's directors must be 18 years old or older, with experience of no more than two directed plays
- Participants must be 18 years old or older
- Saudi nationals and residents are eligible
- Each participant may register with only one group

A jury panel reviews submissions based on:

- Originality and creativity of the script
- Clarity of artistic vision
- Stage feasibility
- Potential to showcase emerging talent
- 5 finalist productions are selected and invited to the contest
- Shortlisted teams receive official notification and must confirm participation

Phase Two: Planning and preparation

Selected teams participate in workshops and mentorship programs covering:

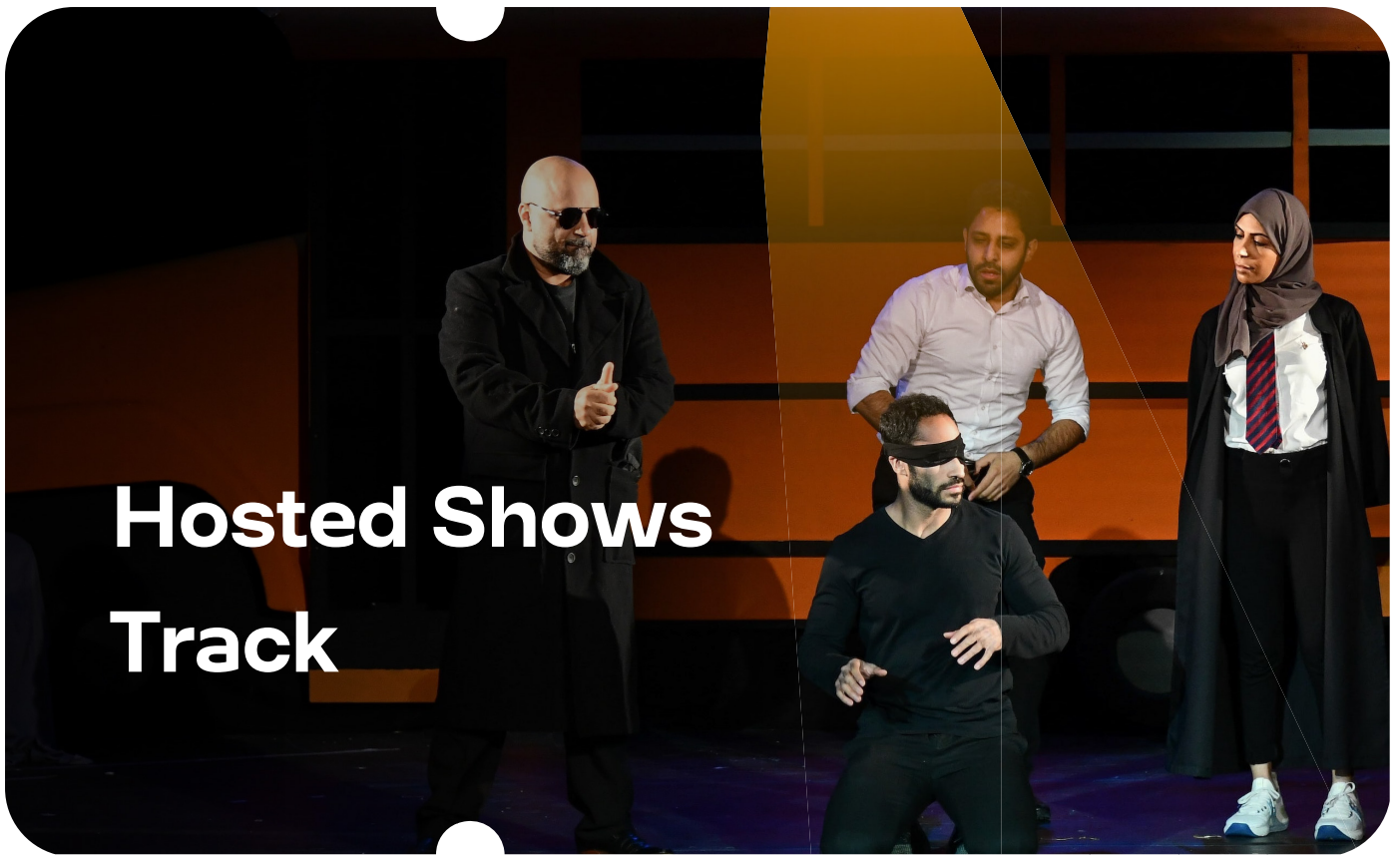
- Script development
- Directing
- Acting and performance coaching
- Technical, production and creative development
- Teams conduct rehearsals in preparation for technical and dress rehearsals at the contest venue

Phase Three: Live Shows

Each of the five finalist productions is performed once during the six-day contest (excluding the final day).

- **A professional jury evaluates productions based on:**
- Script and storytelling
- Directing and artistic vision
- Acting performance
- Technical and production quality





The Hosted Shows Track is designed specifically for the professional performing arts community, providing a prestigious platform for Saudi and international artists to present high-caliber theatrical works. This track highlights established productions that have previously participated in competitions and festivals, offering the contest audience a global perspective on contemporary theater.



Performances in this track are non-competitive, emphasizing cultural exchange, artistic excellence and audience enrichment.

Participant Profile and Eligibility

- **Target Group:** Professional performing artists, theater companies or ensembles.
- **Nationality:** Open to Saudi and international participants.

Work Requirements

- Must be an existing theatrical work.
- The production must have been performed in at least one theater Contest prior to submission within the past two years.
- **Production team size:** Maximum 10 participants (up to six actors/actresses, director, scenic/costume designer, lighting realizer, sound/composition designer, stage manager).
- **Performance Duration:** One act play that must not exceed 45 – 55 minutes.
- **Set:** Ready performance with ready built set and Ithra will only cover freight.
- Ithra could provide small set pieces for example (table, chairs, kitchen supplies and hand props)
- **Submissions are accepted in Arabic or English;** bilingual or subtitled works are encouraged to support accessibility.
- Purpose: Enrich the contest with international and local professional theater, fostering exchange and inspiration for emerging Saudi talent.

Application & Submission

All submissions must be completed through the official contest online portal.

Required materials include:

- Production Information
- Full title of the play
- Running time (between 45 – 55 minutes)
- Proof of participation in previous performances at least one theater competition or festival
- Archival video link of the production
- Company/team Information
- Brief history of the theater company or ensemble
- Biographies of cast and crew
- Technical rider and stage requirements
- Summary of set, cue sheets for lighting, sound and other production needs
- Promotional Materials: Photos, posters or marketing materials for inclusion in the contest program.

Eligibility Notes:

- Companies or ensembles must own the rights to present the work.
- Selected productions must be available to perform during the Contest dates and attend tech rehearsals as scheduled.

Selection & Process



1. Application Review

Submissions are evaluated based on artistic quality, cultural value and technical feasibility. Hosted shows should meet and follow the requirements mentioned above.

2. Curation & Invitation

Selected shows will be invited as part of the Hosted Shows Track. Invitations are extended to both Saudi and international productions that align with the contest's vision

3. Contest Presentation

Productions are presented as featured performances, with technical support provided by the contest team. Ithra will only cover logistics and technical support to the hosted shows, no artistic fees will be provided.

Key Objectives of Hosted Shows

- Showcase professional excellence in local and international theater.
- Enrich the contest experience for audiences and participants by offering diverse cultural perspectives.
- Inspire and engage emerging Saudi artists by exposing them to high-level productions.
- Foster international collaboration and cultural dialogue within the Kingdom.

Submission Guidelines for Contest Shows Track



Application Process (Online Portal Instructions)

Applications must be submitted through the official Ithra Short Play Contest portal at:
<https://www.ithra.com>

Steps:

1. Create an account or log in.
2. Complete the “Contest Show Track Registration Form.”
3. Upload required supporting materials:
4. Director and creative collaborator biographies (producer, designers, up to five collaborators)
5. Director’s previous work
6. Arabic scripts are accepted for the contest track
7. Submit by **May 30, 2026**.
8. You will receive an email confirmation once your application is complete.

Submission Deadlines and Important Dates

- Deadline for receiving complete submission by **30 May, 2026**.
- Shortlisted groups will participate in workshops leading up to the contest and must be available for key dates and commitments.
- Rehearsals will take place starting from June 2026 followed by technical rehearsals in **August 1, 2026**.
- The final performances will be held at the Ithra Theater from **August 10 – 15, 2026**.

Submission Guidelines for Hosted Shows Track

Application Process (Online Portal Instructions)

- Complete the “Hosted Show Application Form.”
- Upload all required materials:
 - Script (PDF)
 - Synopsis (50 words)
 - Cast & Crew biographies (max ten cast members and up to five crew members)
 - Technical rider (light, sound, set, props)
 - Add video link for your proposed performance
- Scripts must be submitted in either Arabic or English and follow cultural guidelines.
- Submit by May 30, 2026
- **Script of the play**
- Supporting Materials (Synopsis, Director’s Vision, Cast & Crew Bios, Technical Proposal)
- Play Summary must be between 25 – 50 words, Director’s Vision (includes detailed set design and requirements with measures and sample photos), full Cast & Crew information, biographies, each team cast should not exceed six participants), any other technical requirements such as sound, light, props list, etc.
- Poster of the play
- Arabic scripts are accepted for the contest track and for the hosted shows track both Arabic and English scripts are accepted.
- Approved scripts must adhere to the cultural norms and sensitivities of the Kingdom.

Submission Deadlines and Important Dates

- Deadline for receiving complete submission by May 30, 2026.
- Responsibilities of the Theater Group.
- Each group is responsible for selecting and preparing their scripts, including finalizing a creative proposal, casting actors, leading rehearsals and managing technical rehearsals.
- Groups are responsible for their own behavior, group cohesion and managing any conflicts that may arise within the group or with other groups.
- Scripts cannot be altered without prior approval from Ithra representatives.

Logistics:

- Ithra will cover airline tickets, housing and transportation costs for up to ten group members during the six days of the contest in August.
- Selected groups must be able to attend all scheduled rehearsals at Ithra prior to their performance scheduled day.



Selection & Shortlisting Process



Jury or Selection Panel Overview

- A diverse panel of regional and international experts in directing, writing, acting and theater production.
- Includes representatives from Ithra and independent theater institutions.

Selection Criteria

Creativity

Uniqueness of concept and artistic interpretation.

Talent

Overall caliber of the submitted script, vision, and proposed cast/ crew.

Feasibility

Ability to execute within time, space, and budget constraints.

Announcement of Finalists and Confirmation Process

- Shortlisted teams for Competition Track will be announced on **June 04, 2026**.
- Professional (Hosted) shows will be notified by **June 04, 2026**.
- Confirmations from teams must be received within **7 days of notification**.

Contest Commitments & Attendance

- Mandatory workshops and rehearsals
- Technical and dress rehearsal schedule will be shared once participant is accepted.
- Performance Dates and Call Times
- Performance Window: August 10 – 15, 2026.
- Each group will be assigned a specific date and time slot at least two weeks prior to the contest.
- Call Time: All performers and crew must be at the venue 3 hours prior to their scheduled showtime.
- Groups are expected to vacate dressing rooms and backstage areas promptly after their performance.

Participant Code of Conduct

- All participants are expected to maintain professionalism, respect, and punctuality.
- No harassment, discrimination or disruptive behavior will be tolerated.
- Participants must wear proper credentials and follow security guidelines while on Ithra premises.
- Failure to follow the code may result in disqualification or removal from the program.



Technical Guidelines

- Stage dimensions and layout
- Lighting, sound and projection facilities
- Set and props guidelines (weight/size restrictions)
- Costume and makeup considerations
- Backstage and venue safety rules
- Minimal show crew and roles and responsibilities from Ithra and contestant teams

Minimal Show Crew and Roles – from Ithra and Contestant Teams

- From Contestant Teams:
- Director
- Assistant Director
- 1–2 Technical Assistants (optional)
- Designers (will collaborate with Ithra’s design team)
- Actors (max 6 per team)

Stage Dimensions and Layout

- Stage Size: Proscenium Theater - **10m wide x 8m deep**
- Height to Grid: **6 meters**
- Wing Space: Limited; all props must be stored within designated backstage area

Lighting, Sound and Projection Facilities

- Basic lighting rig provided (LED, spotlights, wash lights). Static fixtures cannot be refocused to suit each individual play.
- QLAB Playback system to Front of House Left and Right, Sub and onstage speakers left and right.
- No use of projection or personal haze/fog machines permitted

Set and Props Guidelines

- Each group will be given a budget with the contractor to spend on scenic and prop elements. Once the value of the budget has been consumed additional changes to scenic and prop elements will not be accommodated. Each group is required to attend the designated scenic check in meeting to make sure the progress of the design is in the correct direction. Failure to attend these meetings could mean the elements aren't completed as per the vision.
- Maximum set footprint: **7.5m wide x 6m deep.**
- All set pieces must be lightweight and movable by two people .
- Must be constructed in a way for quick installation/dismantle.
- No stairs will be provided into the auditorium.
- Props must be pre-approved for safety and cultural compliance.
- Prop elements must not affect the transition between the next groups rehearsal or performance
- Real or fake food not allowed on stage.
- Only bottle water on stage is permitted.

Costume and Makeup Considerations

- Each group will be given a value to spend on costume and makeup items. Each item and its application need to be approved prior to the dress rehearsal and cannot be changed for the performance.
- Must adhere to modesty standards and local cultural sensitivities.
- Makeup and costume changes must be achievable within minimal time.

Backstage and Venue Safety Rules

- No open flames or hazardous materials
- Emergency exits must remain clear at all times.
- All crew must complete a safety induction before tech week.
- No entrance backstage including dressing rooms is allowed during the six days contest and rehearsals except for participants group schedule to perform that day.
- Rehearsal times are set and final. If the allocated time has been exhausted, you cannot request changes from the venue operators. This is to keep the competition fair for all participants.

Judging & Awards

Evaluation Criteria (Script, Direction, Acting, Technical Execution)



Best Play:

Direction

- Vision and interpretation of the script.
- Cohesiveness of storytelling.
- Actor blocking, pacing and use of space.

Acting/Performance

- **Lead Performances:** Quality and emotional depth of main roles.
- **Supporting Performances:** Strength of ensemble cast.
- Believability, character development and energy.

Script/Playwriting (if original or adapted)

- **Quality of the script:** structure, dialogue, originality.
- **Suitability** for the cast and production resources

Set Design

- Creativity and practicality of scenic design.
- How well the set supports the narrative and mood.
- Transitions and functionality during the performance.

Lighting Design

- Artistic and practical use of lighting to enhance mood, time and space.
- Seamless integration with set and action.

Sound Design/Music

- Effectiveness of sound effects and background scores.
- Quality and execution of live or recorded music.
- Integration with the dramatic action.

Costume Design

- Appropriateness to character, time period and setting.
- Creativity and attention to detail.

Props and Stage Management

- Authenticity and use of props in enhancing storytelling.
- Efficiency and invisibility of scene changes.
Smooth backstage operations.

Choreography/Movement

- For musicals or physical theater.
- Quality, precision and narrative integration of movement.

Technical Execution

- Timing and coordination of lighting, sound, effects, etc.
- Handling of technical cues and transitions.

Audience Engagement/Impact

- Emotional or intellectual effect on the audience.
- Clarity of message or theme.
- Overall entertainment or thought-provoking value.

Originality/Innovation

- Use of new or unusual techniques or storytelling.
- Risk-taking that paid off artistically.

Best Actor / Best Actress

Acting

- **Characterization and Authenticity:** Do the actors convincingly embody their characters?
- **Emotional Range and Expression:** Is there a clear portrayal of emotions and character motivations?
- **Ensemble Work:** Is there strong chemistry and coordination between cast members?
- **Vocal and Physical Performance:** Are the actors' vocal delivery and physical actions effective and appropriate for their roles?
- **Blocking and Movements:** Are the movements purposeful and do they enhance the story and the character's relationships?



Audience Award

- An Audience Selection Award will be given to a performance that is picked by audiences attending the plays.

Jury Composition

- The juries are well-known experts in the theater field such as (scriptwriting, acting, directing and production and design).

Scoring Process

- Jury members will vote from 1 to 10 for each category nominated for the awards depending on the criteria mentioned above.

Awards and Recognition Categories



Audience Choice
Award



Best Actress



Best Actor



Best Play



Best Scenography



Best Script



Best Direction



General Rules and Regulations

for Participants and Theatrical Works

Participant Support & Resources

- Mentorship and Training Opportunities
- Access to Contest Facilities (Rehearsal Spaces, Tech Support)
- Marketing and Promotional Support
- Networking Opportunities

Logistics & Operations

- Arrival and Check-in Procedures
- Travel, Accommodation, and Transportation Policies
- Contest Venue Map and Access Guidelines
- Health, Safety, and Emergency Information

Arrival and Check-in Procedures

- All selected participants must check in at the Artist Welcome Desk at Ithra's Artist Entrance (Gate 1-P5).
- Check-in is open from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., August 8 – 9, 2026.

You will receive:

- ID badge
- Rehearsal schedule
- Venue access map

Travel, Accommodation, and Transportation Policies

- Development Track: Travel, accommodation and meals are the responsibility of the participants.
- Hosted Track: Ithra will cover:
 - Round-trip airfare for 10 members
 - Shared accommodation in a partner hotel
 - Daily transportation between hotel and venue
 - Daily per diem
- Participants must communicate any travel changes at least 14 days prior to arrival.

Contest Venue Map and Access Guidelines

A detailed venue map will be sent to all confirmed participants and available on the Contest app. It includes:

- Stage access points
- Dressing rooms
- Rehearsal rooms
- Tech support booths
- Emergency exits

Health, Safety and Emergency Information

Emergency contacts will be shared at check-in.

First Aid station located backstage.

All participants must review and sign the Venue Safety Agreement.

COVID-19 or other health regulations (if applicable) will be communicated ahead of time.

Communication & Contact Information

- Contest Team Contacts (Competition Coordinator, Technical Director, etc.)
- Communication Channels (Email, WhatsApp Groups, Contest App)
- Social Media and Promotion Guidelines

Contest Team Contacts:

- To be added later

Communication Channels:

- Email will be the primary communication channel for scheduling and updates.
- A WhatsApp group will be created for each participating team.
- A Contest App will be available by July 2026 for schedules, maps, and updates.

Communication Channels

- All promotional posts should tag @IthraTheater and use the hashtag #Ithra Short Play Contest 2026.
- Content must adhere to Saudi media guidelines and show respect for cultural values.
- Teams may be photographed or filmed during the event. By participating, you agree to allow your image and performance to be used in official marketing.



مسابقة إثناء
للمسرحيات
القصيرة

Ithra Short Play Contest

Still Need Help?

Please Contact Us

Please Contact Us

 **800 122 1224**

 **info@ithra.com**

**We can't wait to see
you shine on stage!**

Thank You